

Interviewee: Roberto Sanchez

Interviewer: Calvin Foley

The following interview was conducted on behalf of oral history program of the Washington County Museum and Century High School. The interviewee is Roberto Sanchez and the interviewer is Calvin Foley. The interview took place at 2:30 on Friday May 21st, 2004.

First question: What is your story? How did you come to be in Hillsboro?

My story? When I first come to the United States I was almost 18 years old. I was 17 and for that first year I work throughout the year. And then when I turn 18, that's when I begin High School. My Father, and my older brothers and sisters, they were living in Hillsboro already. My mother and my younger brothers came to join them.

So you started High school at age 18?

At 18.

What was your family's attitude towards an education?

As I told you, the first year that I got here in the United States, I began working. One day I went to my parents and I explained to them my plans and getting enrolled in a school, and both of them were kind of negative. My father didn't say, "K that's a good idea, go ahead and enrolled," but he didn't also say "that's a bad idea. I don't want you to get enrolled in school." My mother's answer was that as long as I didn't do what my other brothers did, bothers and sisters, to drop out of school after a year, or to just to come and play, or to fool around.

Why do think they had that negative reaction?

I think it had to do with family members, not graduating from high school.

Which schools did you attend in the district?

Glencoe was the only one.

Do you have any experiences from Glencoe?

I think, to me Glencoe is very unique. This is where I begin to learn English. This is where I begin to make my first friends. I was captain of the soccer team. I had a good coach, good advisors, good teachers and they make everything very easy to me.

So I take it that before you attended the school you didn't know much English?

I knew zero English.

So you took ESL

I took E.S.L and English.

You just told me that you felt pretty comfortable at school.

Yeah.

Was there any thing that would have made you feel more comfortable or uncomfortable at any time?

I don't think there was something else to make it more comfortable. I felt very comfortable. When I graduate. Actually one of my goals was to come back to Glencoe I didn't feel like leaving Glencoe. I knew I wanted to graduate and to move on with my life, but somehow I wanted to come back to Glencoe.

Did you feel that you had the same opportunities as other Hispanic students?

Yes, I think this is the country of opportunities, and those opportunities can be positive, or they can be negative, and that is up to you. You choose which opportunities you are going to take, the positive ones or the negative ones.

What were your feelings toward the education system here in the district?

I think the school has a good education system, and I agree very strong that also the student has to put a huge percent of his part in order to learn the language or be successful in a school.

Did you ever face racism or stereotyping in or out of school?

I the school I faced some differences. I don't know if I want to label them as racism. I had teachers who were the same with all the students, and I had teachers that were a little different with the Hispanic students. I don't know if I want to label that as a racism, but outside the school... something that happens very often to me and it still happens are that I get stopped by cops even when I'm walking. I think that's racism.

How did you ever feel about that?

Angry. I felt like crying, like screaming, like doing something about it... but I think racism exists. There is even racism among Hispanics being racist towards other Hispanics, and we need to change this racism in order to change racism at all.

(For the record) What years did you attend?

The first year that I enrolled was 1988, and the year that I graduate was 1992.

Do you think that the Hillsboro School District provided enough support for Hispanic students?

I think the district provides enough support, and I also think we need to find that support. We need to ask, "where can we get support?" and what kind of support the district is offering in order for us to take that support. If we don't know what kind of support, then we will think that it does not even exist.

What programs did you think had the most beneficial impact on you and other Hispanics?

As I told you, I was an ESL student. And I think the ESL program helped me a lot. Something that probably that would have changed my way of viewing high school and the ESL program is that the last year probably giving me the opportunity to do a mainstream English class just to see how it is because I went to college without any experience of how an English class was going to be.

You just took ESL; they never integrated you with the actual English?

No.

In your experience did you ever feel language or cultural barriers that affected you schooling?

I don't think there is any barriers. not the language not the culture u make your own barrier that's like an excuse not defined in school.

While you were in high school did you ever feel the drive to succeed?

When I was in high school I knew that I wanted to graduate from high school. I never thought about continuing a higher education. Something that I did is that in Jan.- Feb., I filled an application for financial aid, and the one for university admission. My plans were to go back to Mexico, which I did, but when I was living in Mexico after the summer I graduated, my parents called me and told me that I was admitted to the Oregon state university, and that's why I decided to come back and continue in a higher education

Now what methods are used to transition Hispanic ESL students into mainstream classes?

We are using the *Woodcock Muñoz* test. This test measures the student vocabulary verbal analogies identifying letters and words and writing skills. This is one way and then the

second way we meet with their teachers and we decide if they are ready to move into mainstream classes. We'll use one or the other. We concentrate more on the Woodcock Muñoz test.

What are the parent's reactions to any academic outreach programs provided for their children?

We're working on parents being more interested in what we are offering students. We're doing parent meetings we make phone calls we send letters we let the students know and every year we're getting more and more parents so their reaction seems to be positive.

Do you think that the parents are informed with their child school through newsletters, mail, and from stuff sent home with the students themselves?

I think that we need to work on the part on getting parents more involved. We want them to come more to our meetings. As I told you, we have more and more parents, but we're wanting more and more involved our goal is to have 100 percent interested. The more interest they show in the school the better their children will do in school. Being informed I totally agree on that we have bilingual people bilingual staff who will call them and let the parents know about the meetings we have translators so that everything that we send home is translated. We will send it in English, and we will send it in Spanish and when they come to meetings. We have staff to translate for them. So, I think we are doing an excellent job on informing parents.

Have you been able to work with the parents of the Hispanic students at all?

Right now we have these multicultural soccer teams of both boys and girls and their parents come and they share with us about the games. We have parents who have been volunteers to be helping coaching. Having them come to school more often would be a little better.

What type of feedback do you receive from the Hispanic students?

We have students who come and they ask us for help. And advice it can be related to problems because after age, teenagers have family problems so that's one way that the students come and ask us for something other things that they do is that they come and ask us for help in other classes. The other feedback I think is our students are like any other students we have students who haven't a call to graduate they know that the main group is at the end of school because they want to do something they want to become someone and like any other students we have also students who are confused and they still haven't found the main purpose of being in school so I think we have both groups

What are some of the reoccurring issues for Hispanic students?

We have migrant students. A migrant student is a teenager who works in seasonal jobs, like strawberries, for example. They will pick strawberries, and at the end of the school year, they will move into another state, and they will enroll in the school in that other state. They will come back later on. That's the only reoccurring, or why students come back.

Have any of these issues changed over the years?

I think we have a different Hispanic dropout every year. The GPA, that depends on the students. We have students who have been in school back in Mexico. For example they will be 9th grade or 10th grade and they will move into the US. They will have educational background, and we know that the student is going to succeed. But, we also have teenagers who haven't been in the school, so they don't have an elementary school level. So we will have to concentrate on more of them but we will have to dedicate to them. So two different letters the change varies over the years too. Attendance I don't think attendance changed that much. A student that is going to have an attendance problem, he will change it over the years or he will be like that until he graduates or if he graduates.

Are there still any teacher issues?

I don't know if I will be the right person to answer that question I'm not in classes I have a good relationship with teachers.

What programs are in place now that addresses the needs of Hispanic students?

We have the ESL programs in high school. I know we have ESL programs in high school elementary school and middle school. I know that some elementary schools they have a dual program, which is they will teach half a day in English and the other half in Spanish and those students will grow up learning both languages. Here in high school we offer a Spanish class, which is for Spanish language learners. This is for the students who have an elementary background, and they need to work on their Spanish.

Where do you think these programs are going?

I think it will be a wrong decision if they disappear these programs. In ESL we offer ESL American studies. We offer ESL world studies. We offer ESL health. Study skills. Of course, ESL classes, English as a second language. And every school is different I'm sure that other schools have different classes. So, if we receive a new student who has only his last year to graduate and we send him to the mainstream American history he won't be able to survive without these programs they would probably struggle more in the mainstream classes.

What improvements do you believe could be made to address the needs of Hispanic students?

Finding a way to get the more involved with extra curricular activities, after school activities. Give the students goals that they can achieve, identifying their needs, but as I told you there are different groups of students, and different goals for them to achieve.

What are some of the reasons for changing the programs to better serve Hispanics?

I don't know if there are any reasons.

What is the greatest obstacle for Hispanic students for trying to further their education?

The greatest obstacle would be, and I don't even consider this an obstacle, I think its something difficult to do but there is a way to do it: It would be their economical situation. We have students, I don't want to say a large group, but we have students who are here by themselves, so they have to work after school full time, and that money will be used for rent, for bills, for food, and the basic things. So that will be the greatest obstacle to dropout because for their financial situation.

Is there anything else that you want to tell me that I haven't asked?

Speaking from my personal opinion, I think, and I strongly believe that if you set a goal and you really want to reach that goal, only you can help yourself reach that goal. It's totally up to you. That's the only thing I have to add.